

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESS REACTION TO FORD-THORN MEETING

1. PRESS COVERAGE HERE OF PRIME MINISTER GASTON THORN'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD NOVEMBER 12 WAS OVERSHADOWED BY REACTION TO THE FUROR CAUSED BY THORN'S COMMENTS IN THE UNGA'S ANTI-ZIONIST RESOLUTION. LUXEMBOURG COMMENTATORS WERE PLEASED AT THE HONOR ACCORDED THEIR PREMIER BY THE TETE-A-TETE WITH PRESIDENT FORD BUT NOT PARTICULARLY EXERCISED OVER THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES DISCUSSED. WHILE STRESSING THAT THORN HAD NOT FAILED TO REMIND THE PRESIDENT OF THE BENELUX COUNTRIES' "EXCULUSION" FROM THE FORTHCOMING RAMBOUILLET MEETING, MOST NEWSPAPERS DESCRIBED THE MEETING AS TAKING PLACE IN AN EXTREMELY CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE AND NOTED THE NEARLY COMPLETE ABSENCE OF BILATERAL PROBLEMS.

2. COVERAGE OF THE MEETING VARIED WIDELY. THE INDEPENDENT FRENCH-LANGUAGE DAILY REPUBLICAIN LORRAIN RAN A PROMINENT PHOTO OF THE TWO LEADERS IN ITS MORNING EDITION OF NOVEMBER 13, BUT OFFERED ONLY A BLAND SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND DESCRIBED THEM AS REFLECTING "PERFECT MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING." THE GERMAN-LANGUAGE CATHOLIC DAILY LUXEMBURGER WORT, THE DUCHY'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER AND THE VOICE OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL OPPOSITION, IGNORED THE EVENT IN ITS EDITIONS

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OF NOVEMBER 13 AND REFERRED TO IT TODAY ONLY IN THE BODY OF

A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE ON THE CONTROVERSY GENERATED BY THORN'S REBUKE OF THE UNGA FOR ITS ANTI-ZIONIST VOTE. THE GERMAN-LANGUAGE DAILY TAGEBLATT (SOCIALIST), ALWAYS RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE "GRATUITOUS PUBLICITY" TO A TEMPORARY POLITICAL ALLY AND LONG-TERM RIVAL, DID NOT REPORT THE MEETING.

3. RADIO-TELEVISION LUXEMBOURG SENT A CAMERA CREW TO WASHINGTON SPECIFICALLY TO COVER THE EVENT AND GAVE IT PROMINENT BUT NOT SUBSTANTIVE COVERAGE IN ITS EVENING NEWS NOVEMBER 13, MENTIONING THE SMALLER COUNTRIES' NERVOUSNESS ABOUT THE RAMBOUILLET MEETING BUT DWELLING ON THE HARMONIOUS STATE OF CURRENT RELATIONS BETWEEN LUXEMBOURG AND THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNUSUAL ACCESS OF PRIME MINISTER THORN TO THE THINKING OF POWERFUL AMERICAN LEADERS SUCH AS THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY KISSINGER.

4. THE GERMAN-LANGUAGE WEEKLY LETZEBURGER JOURNAL, VOICE OF THORN'S OWN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, MADE THE MEETING THE NEWS PEG FOR AN EDITORIAL ON THE CRUCIAL ROLE THORN WAS PLAYING ON THE WORLD STAGE. IT SAID THE VALUE OF THORN'S PERSONAL BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH US LEADERS SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED AND SUPPORTED HIM FULLY IN HIS CONDEMNATION OF THE UNGA "RACISM" RESOLUTION.

5. THE COMMUNIST DAILY ZEITUNG CARRIED A BRIEF FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE IN ITS EDITIONS OF NOVEMBER 13 WHICH REPORTED TERSELY THAT THORN HAD CONFERRED WITH PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER ABOUT US-EC RELATIONS, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THE LATEST IMPROVEMENTS IN NATO DEFENSES.
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